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Farm Broadcasters Letter

United States Department of Agriculture Office of Public Affairs Radio-TV Division Washington D.C. 20250 (202) 447-4330

Letter No. 2518

Aug. 9, 1991

FARM NUMBERS -- USDA economists say the number of farms in the U.S. in 1991 is down 2 percent to 2.1 million farms. The total land in farms is 983 million acres, which is just fractionally below last year. The number of farms has continued to decline faster than land in farms, with the average farm size increasing from 461 acres in 1990 to 467 in 1991. Texas held its position as the state with the most farms -- 185,000, which is down 1,000 from last year. Contact: Dan Ledbury (202) 475-4790.

WEATHER & SALES to the Soviet Union are two major unknown elements in the outlook for grains & oilseeds in the months ahead, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Bruce Gardner told the House Agriculture Committee last week. Recent hot, dry weather has stressed the U.S. corn crop at a critical stage of development. Elsewhere, extensive floods have hit China & hot dry conditions have prevailed in USSR spring grain areas. Contact: Keith Collins (202) 447-5955.

PSEUDORABIES ERADICATION -- All states in the U.S., plus Puerto Rico, are now actively involved in wiping out pseudorabies, a costly disease of swine & other livestock, USDA officials say. Recently, Montana joined the five-state program under which federal, state & industry participants cooperate in systematically eradicating pseudorabies. Contact: Larry Mark (202) 447-3977.

HORTICULTURAL EXPORTS in May were \$467.6 million -- 4 percent above the same month a year ago. Fresh & canned vegetables & wine registered the sharpest increases. Fresh citrus & non-citrus fruit & tree nuts accounted for the major decreases. During the first eight months -- October through May -- of fiscal year 1991, the total value of U.S. horticultural exports was \$3.5 billion -- 11 percent over the same period last year. Contact: Frank J. Piason (202) 447-6590.

THREATENED PLANT THEFT -- A theft of rare plants from a national forest in Illinois may significantly hinder efforts to save the threatened Mead's milkweed, says F. Dale Robertson, chief of USDA's Forest Service. An entire population of Mead's milkweed was stolen from the Shawnee National Forest in mid-June. The plant is an important remnant of the tallgrass prairie which was once prevalent in much of the midwest. Contact: Chris Holmes (202) 205-1006.

EQUIPMENT CONVENTION -- The Farm Equipment Manufacturers Association will hold their fall convention Nov. 2 - 6 in Dallas, Texas, at the Loews Anatole Hotel. Ron Knutson, professor & extension economist in ag policy & marketing at Texas A&M University, will keynote. Contact: FEMA (314) 991-0702.

SMALL-SCALE TIPS -- Tips from the Summer issue of **Small-Scale Agriculture Today**: For seeds, the rule of thumb for planting depth is four to six times the diameter of the seed; Pick no melon before its time; and if the fruit set on a peach tree is heavy; THIN. For a copy of the latest issue: Contact: Bud Kerr (202) 401-4640.

DANCES WITH GOATS -- USDA's Sam Coleman says goats may well be the animal kingdom's version of a perpetual motion machine. "They're like cattle -- they don't really sleep, they just rest," says Coleman, an animal scientist who has worked on two studies aimed at helping small-scale farmers get the most from their goat herds. Contact: Samuel W. Coleman (405) 262-5291.

HOW TO PACK -- When planning your vacation or business trip, give some thought to packing your suitcase, says Evva Wilson, a clothing specialist with the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service. Don't forget luggage can get lost, so pack an overnight bag as carry-on luggage; pack heavy articles next to the back of the suitcase so they will be on the bottom when you're carrying the suitcase; & roll & stuff underwear, hose & socks in shoes. Wilson has other clothing and packing tips. Contact: Evva Wilson (504) 388-4141.

DISEASE COMMITTEE TO MEET -- The Secretary of Agriculture's Advisory Committee on Foreign Animal and Poultry Diseases will meet Aug. 27 - 29 in Ames, Iowa. The public may attend the meeting, but cannot participate in the committee discussions. Comments may be addressed to the committee before, during or after the meeting. Contact: Amichai Heppner (301) 436-7799.

BARN AGAIN -- The National Trust for Historic Preservation & Successful Farming magazine are now accepting nominations for 1992 BARN AGAIN! Farm Heritage. Awards will be presented for preservation of an historic farm or ranch and preserving & practical use of an older barn or other farm building. Nominations are due Sept. 1. Contact: Mary Humstone (303) 623-1504.

NEW TOMATO KEY TO HIGH-TECH -- Unusual cherry tomatoes ripening in test tubes in a USDA lab hint at a possible new source of tomato paste, catsup, soup & salsa for the 21st century. Without the usual steps of planting, growing & harvesting, growers would skim tomato cells from indoor vats for quick processing into foods, says USDA Biologist Betty K. Ishida. Only the cells of the fruit, not the plant itself, would be grown in the vats. Ishida says this type of indoor farming might be a future option, especially where land & water will be at a premium. Contact: Betty K. Ishida (415) 559-5726.

PACIFIC RIM OUTLOOK -- U.S. ag exports to the East Asian economies of Japan, South Korea, Taiwan & Hong Kong reached a record \$13.3 billion in fiscal 1990, but are forecast to drop 4 percent in 1991. The developed Pacific Rim markets are forecast to take 45 percent of U.S. farm exports in 1991. Japan & Canada are the top two markets. Gulf war jitters, trade friction & unstable asset markets have shaken consumer confidence from Taipei to Tokyo to Toronto, but the Pacific region appears poised for a period of sustained growth. Contact: Carol Goodloe (202) 219-0610.

FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA #1783 -- The U.S. population is living longer, but sometimes has to pay a heavy price for health insurance. On this edition of Agriculture USA, Brenda Curtis talks with Montgomery County, Md., Extension Family Life Specialist Ann Elword about adequate health insurance for Senior Citizens. (Weekly reel -- 13-1/2 minute documentary.)

CONSUMER TIME #1265 -- Turkey & the fast food restaurant; senior health care counseling; new rubber products from an old plant; it's a very good ice cream; making totem poles. (Weekly reel of 2-1/2 to 3 minute consumer features.)

AGRITAPE NEWS & FEATURES #1773 -- USDA News Highlights; USSR crop report; new wetlands definition; new poultry processing tests; watermelon production. (Weekly reel of news features.)

NEWS FEATURE FIVE #1432 -- Transgenic spuds; tougher tubers; heat & wheat quality; wheat to beat the heat; "transforming" wheat. (Weekly reel of research feature stories.)

UPCOMING ON USDA RADIO NEWSLINE -- Tues., Aug. 20, weekly weather & crop outlook, ag outlook, ag trade update, world poultry situation; Thurs., Aug. 22, vegetable outlook, poultry production; Fri., Aug. 23, livestock & poultry update. (These are the USDA reports we know about in advance. Our Newsline carries many stories every day which are not listed in this lineup. Please don't let the lack of a story listing keep you from calling.)

DIAL THE USDA RADIO NEWSLINES (202) 488-8358 or 8359.
Material changed at 5 p.m., EDT, each working day.

FROM OUR TELEVISION NEWS SERVICE

FEATURES -- Pat O'Leary reports on changes in rural America since the 1950's, through the eyes of a veteran USDA analyst (two-part series); Mike Thomas of the University of Missouri reports on farm safety; Artis Ford of Mississippi State University on that area's record blueberry harvest.

ACTUALITIES -- Secretary of Agriculture Edward Madigan talks to members of the Regional Reporters Association in Washington; William Richards, Soil Conservation Service chief, on new wetlands definition; USDA Economist Bob Dubman on farm income; USDA Meteorologist Ray Motha with a crop & weather update; Marvin Norcross, USDA food safety specialist, on poultry testing to be carried out by the National Broiler Council.

UPCOMING FEATURES -- Pat O'Leary reports on USDA plant explorers who search the globe for rare plant species; Lynn Wyvill reports on low-maintenance gardening; DeBoria Janifer on USDA's Forest Service partnerships.

EVERY OTHER WEEK -- Agriculture Update, five minutes of USDA farm program info, in news desk format with B-Roll footage.

Available on Satellite Westar 4, Transponder 12D (Channel 23), audio 6.2 or 6.8:

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| THURSDAY | 7:30 - 7:45 p.m., EDT |
| SATURDAY | 10 - 10:45 a.m., EDT |
| MONDAY | 8 - 8:45 a.m., EDT |

OFFMIKE

COTTON & VEGETABLE YIELDS...are lower in areas afflicted by the sweet potato whitefly, says Jim Hearn (KURV, Edinburg, Texas). This is the first year of widespread infestation in the Rio Grande Valley. Jim says the pest uses many plant species as a host, making it difficult to control. If an effective method is not found, Jim says, it could quickly replace the boll weevil as the most damaging pest to producers in his area.

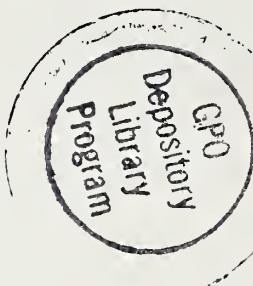
INSECT PRESSURE...is very light this year, says Chris Kimbell (KNOE, Monroe, La.). One factor may have been heavy rains this spring. But the heavy rains also drowned corn & removed fertilizer, which results in spotty yields. Chris says the cotton crop is looking good. Harvest will need a dry fall & a late freeze.

SOYBEAN RECORD...could be pushed again this year, says Pam Jahnke-Welch (WTSO, Madison, Wisc.). Timely rains have the crop looking good. Hot temperatures have helped corn recover from wetness.

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Radio-TV Division
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, D.C. 20250-1300

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COVERING COUNTY FAIRS...is consuming much of David Lee's (KHMO, Hannibal, Mo.) broadcast day. Live coverage originates at locations in Missouri & Illinois. Producers are working on the second hay cutting & hoping for rain; soybeans are at the critical pod filling stage.

100th ANNIVERSARY...of the Freeborn County Fair was covered live by Al Carstens (KATE, Albert Lea, Minn.). Al says it was one of the best fairs yet. Corn crop is progressing nicely. Late corn is tasselling & will need continued warm temperatures this month to complete development before an early frost.

CONGRATULATIONS...to Joe Courson (University of Georgia Extension Service, Athens) who received an Award of Excellence from the Agricultural Communicators in Education at the organization's 1991 international conference in Rapid City, S.D.

Vic Powell
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Chief, Radio & TV Division